

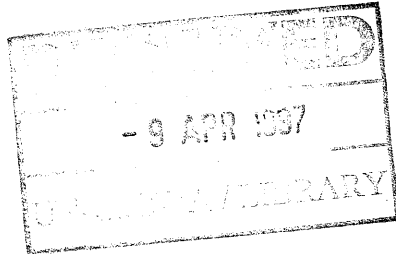


UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR WESTERN ASIA

FOR PARTICIPANTS ONLY  
E/ECWA/POP.CON.I/UP.2/E  
5 February 1974  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

FIRST REGIONAL POPULATION CONFERENCE 1)  
BEIRUT, LEBANON, 18 FEBRUARY - 1 MARCH 1974

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THE TRADE UNION FEDERATION  
AND THE POPULATION PROBLEMS

by

Trade Union Federation  
Syrian Arab Republic

74 - 1812

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Trade Unions are public class organizations representing the working class along with all toiling masses . Historically trade Unions started and developed hand in hand with the rise and growth of industry . The role of these organizations acquired further importance with the aggravation of contradictions and class struggle between the owners of the means of production and those who are deprived from them .

The tasks of Trade Unions in capitalist countries lie in defending the rights of workers and toiling masses, closing their ranks for the overthrowing of the capitalist system and setting up a new society , that is of socialism .

In a socialist country or in a country on the road of socialist transformation , the role of trade Unions completely differ . These trade unions have to struggle for the protection of the socialist system , its development and the backing of the revolutionary change , besides their struggle to protect the workers' interests . The Trade unions in a socialist system or in a system on the road of socialism constitute a real institute of production , a revolutionary and a socialist one . These unions move from the struggle for economic needs , that is , a negative struggle to the political and positive one ; from there on to the actual participation in leading the society . Every attempt aiming at undermining the political role of these organizations is really aiming at disregarding the historical role of the working class and trying to make it

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deviate from its main goal in building a socialist society ; thus isolating a major sector of the people from participating in the country's issues and taking part in contributing to the political affairs of the country .

In the Syrian Arab Republic in which the operation of revolutionary change has assumed success , the Trade Unions following the 8th of March Revolution actively take part in building the society . The Trade Unions Federation, thanks to fusion with the Baath Arab Socialist Party and the government, was able to issue a number of important labor legislative decrees, foremost among which was the law of Syndicate Organization no 84 dated 1968 . This law is considered a historical event in the realm of syndicate organization not only on the local level but on the international one . This was affirmed by all trade unions and unionists who had the opportunity to read the items of this law .

The law which was brought about by the labor force , has emphasized the bases of central democracy and the role of this force in laying down the economic foundation in the country, by means of actual participation in the leadships of production, taking part in planning and observation and combatting bureaucracy and red - tape in the state body .

The reasons which led to the issuance of the law are the following .

1. Organizing the socialist society and the massing up of

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the toiling masses ' potentials for the battles of national liberation and socialist transformation , as dictated by the congresses of the Baath Arab Socialist Party which highlighted the principle of people's democracy.

2. Leading the battle of socialist transformation by the labor force with its syndicate movement ; in addition to protecting the achievements realized by the revolution for the benefit of the toiling masses .
3. Leading the administration of production by the workers for defining the responsibilities in the fields of organizations and planning under a democratic rule .
4. Supporting the armed struggle of the Arabs in their battle against racialist and Zionist invasion of Arab territories, and for protecting the Arab Nation's resources and expertise for the victory of the just Arab cause and the unity and progress of the Arab Nation and in realizing a unified socialist Arab society .
5. Emphasizing the role of the labor class in protecting the socialist revolution .
6. Affirming the freedom of popular organizations , workers and peasants , within the national and socialist framework , protecting syndicate action , its freedom and democracy from base to top and securing the implementation of the popular organization's role in building socialism .

Article no 17 of the Law reads as follows .

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- a. The realization of the Arab people's goal in Unity, Freedom and Socialism .
- b. Protecting work and production as they constitute the national wealth , in addition to their continual development and enhancement .
- c. Preparing the labor force to hold its responsibilities in the fields of work and production by means of technical and professional orientation .
- d. Unifying workers' struggle, protecting their moral, material, health , cultural and social interests, defending their rights and trying to raise their professional , class, socialist , national and human levels.
- e. Presenting progressive means and socialist competition in work and production , combatting bureaucracy and consolidating the socialist general ownership.

Moreover, legislative Decree no 33 was issued in 28.12.1971 to the effect of classifying all workers as permanent .

Also Legislative Decree no 4 dated 9.1.1973 providing family allowances for woman employee in state offices and institutions .

Last but no least there is a legislative Decree no 21. which gives workers the right to participate in the discussion of development plans , presenting proposals over ways of implementing these plans through the participation of workers in the administrative councils of factories and economic institutions.

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The trade Unions Federation takes part in laying down the general five year plan of the state, and in all planning bodies on all levels . Workers has consequently representatives in the People's Assembly and in the Local Administrative Councils.

The Federation issued an order no 81, dated 13.3.1972 setting up a fund aiming at the assistance of aged and handicapped unionists who have spent more than ten years in the unionist work and who have been left without any other means of income.

In 4.4.72 the Institution of social Insurance issued an order allocating 15 million Syria pounds for building workers houses . The building operations are underway.

This Institution has also planned to build three hospitals for workers in Damascus and Aleppo.

Since its establishment in 18.3.1938, the Trade Unions Federation in the Syrian Arab Republic has been leading the struggle of the labor force for the realization of a better and prosperous future . The labor force under the leadership of its syndicale organization , has led a relentless struggle against French occupation and offered numerous sacrifices . Following independence , the working class stood face to face Before its class enemy represented in the big bourgeoisie and capitalists.

Since the 8th of March Revolution in 1963 , deep and radical changes took place in Syria . All industrial institutions and banks were nationalized . A wide- scale agrarian reform was applied in addition to limiting foreign Trade to the state

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and putting internal trade under state control . Many industrial projects have been started , e.g. The Euphrates Dam , Fertilizers and Phosphate factories . Oil has also been nationally exploited. Thus the public sector has played a major and leading role in society .

Consequently new tasks have to be shouldered by the trade unions. Besides their responsibility to defend the material rights of the workers , they fought for raising the workers cultural level and socialist consciousness , They earnestly endeavored to make the public sector a success and protect it. Moreover they exerted great efforts to increase production and hold production months in support of the armed forces' fortitude who are fighting to restore our usurped rights . Due to this industrial development and the increase of the labor organizations in our country , workers hastened to be enrolled in the trade unions . In 1955 the number of workers registered in the Trade Unions Federation was 27618 which in 1973 the number exceeded 200,000.

The Federation has raised in its seventeenth congress of September 1972 the slogan of " Political as a substitute for narrow syndical struggle in the foundation of the unity of the working class and a support of the liberation battle " The Federation has expressed by this slogan the important and considerable role played by the masses and the heavy responsibilities entrusted to them. This slogan indicates to what extent

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the labor force has become c<sup>n</sup>scious and politically mature comprehending the nature of the present stage ,

The Trade Unions Federation has attached great importance to the labor culture which has been developed and acquired new content with the development of trade Unions . In the light of this development we can define the concept of the labor culture as crystallizing the concepts of the working class in a doctrine by which the syndical movement can fight to implement its numerous functions in building the society .The syndical movement can achieve success through its whose connection with the production operation endeavoring to support and consolidate the socialist achievements realized in our country .

The labor culture is not confined to raising the cultural level of the workers but to qualify them professionally due to rapid development of machinery which requires continual training to cope with world industrial development .

The Federation has straight direction on syndical institutes where the workers receive various economic and social sciences in addition to labor and syndical education .

These institutes are divided into two categories .

1. Preparatory institutes numbered 4 distributed among the governarates of the country . The study duration is two months . The worker is given two months leave from his main job having all rights in his factory or institution . In 1973, nine hundred and fifth workers including 58 woman graduated

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from these preparatory institutes .

2. The Central institute which is located in the city of Damascus  
The study duration here is nine months during which participants receive boarding and food facilities free of charge .  
All conditions of the first category are applied on the second .to be admitted to this institute , the worker has to have the preparatory certificate .

The Federation reserves a number of seats for workers enrolled in syndical organizations in other Arab countries .  
In 1973 , five workers out of forty three graduated from this institute were from Arab countries . The Central Institute has held syndical courses in which workers from all the Arab - countries took part . They came from the tele- communications institution ( p.t.t.) , Textile factories and other institutions.  
The Institute has also held a symposium to introduce the Arab Worker Organization .

The labor organization in friendly countries offer scholarship to the syrian arab workers to follow courses in these countries . 95 Syrian workers have so far participated in such courses .

The Trade Unions try earnestly to hold professional courses either in factories or in special training centers to raise the professional standard of the workers .

As for combatting illitracy which was inherited from past periods , the trade Unions Federation has not stood fold-handed .

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It exerted great efforts in this field and achieved tangible results , through the holding of courses among worker groupings , factories and night schools .

The labor culture in its present concept has been attained through severe struggle against all forces which had tried to deprive the labor force from practising its historical role in the development of society , against the forces which attempted to empty the labor education from its real and basic content and change it into a routine operation limited to developing the technical level of a certain sector of the workers. The major labor questions were neglected such as class struggle, society problems and the future of the country as a whole .

The Fédération has set up a pharmacy for the workers in every governarate in which medicines are sold at reduced prices . Also there is a workers infirmary in every district of the country where workers receive various kinds of medical care .

Consumer cooperatives were set up by the Federation to supply the workers with the basic commodities and to free them from the merchant's greed . These cooperatives are open for all strata of people to get their necessities whether enrolled in the trade unions or not. There are 16 cooperatives all over the country . New cooperatives are underway to facilitate providing the people with their basic requirements .

On the other hand the trade unions participate effectively

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in solving the problem of housing which is considered a world problem especially in urban areas . A great number of housing unites where built by the trade unions . Hundreds of workers enjoy a healthy and quiet living after getting apartments in thse buildings .

